

THE AHA FOUNDATION

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*college chapter handbook*



*ahafoundation*

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*“Women everywhere, of all cultures, merit access to education and basic human rights.” — AYAAN HIRSI ALI*

# *the aha foundation*

## WELCOME

*Thank you for deciding to start a college chapter of the AHA Foundation.* At the AHA Foundation, our focus is entirely human rights. Our job is to protect and defend the rights of girls and women in the United States from oppression justified by religion and culture.

On college campuses, we raise awareness of the religious and cultural subjugation of girls and women, we help fight for their rights by actively supporting legislation that protects them, we do research to further understanding of our issues and we distribute resource materials on campus to women's centers, health clinics and other appropriate locations.

## WHAT WE DO

To get started with the AHA Foundation, it's important to first get acquainted with who we are and our core issues.

In response to ongoing abuses of women's rights, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and her supporters established the AHA Foundation in 2007 to help protect and defend the rights of women in the West from oppression justified by religion and culture.

The AHA Foundation works to protect and reinforce the basic rights and freedoms of women and girls, including security and control of their own bodies, access to an education, the ability to work outside the home and control their own income, freedom of expression and association, and the myriad other basic civil rights defined under the laws of Western democracies and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Foundation is opposed to the adoption of dual legal systems to adjudicate family disputes in religious families and supports the separation of all religions and the State.

*The AHA Foundation engages in four primary activities to protect and defend the rights of women and girls in the West from oppression committed in the name of religion and culture: investigate, inform, influence, and intervene.*

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## **INVESTIGATE**

The AHA Foundation investigates instances of violence against women and girls in the West that are justified in the name of religion and culture. We compile data on these crimes, which are not currently tracked by any law enforcement or government agency in the United States.

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## **INFORM**

The AHA Foundation informs the public about these instances of oppression of women and girls in the United States and other Western countries. The Foundation compiles news articles, publishes reports, and hosts conferences to spread the word about the continued oppression of women and girls in the U.S. committed in the name of religion and culture.

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## **INFLUENCE**

The AHA Foundation works to persuade politicians and policymakers to prioritize the enforcement of existing laws that protect women's rights and, where necessary, to create special legislation to protect the rights and freedoms of women and girls from oppression committed in the name of religion and culture. See our Legislative Outreach page on our website for examples of our legislative efforts.

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## **INTERVENE**

The Foundation is setting up models of appropriate intervention and training materials for law enforcement and service providers to guide first responders on best practices to protect and defend the victims of such crimes in the United States. We want to bring the models and training to first responders and law enforcement in every community where such crimes are likely to occur. The Foundation is also creating national and regional databases and resource guides for girls and women in distress so that we can link them with social workers, attorneys, safe houses, and individuals and institutions qualified to deal with cases of crime, maltreatment and abuse in the religious and cultural contexts.

## OUR ISSUES

Everyone working with us has a responsibility to understand our issues and the AHA Foundation's stance on each of them. Accurate representation is crucial to being an asset to the AHA Foundation team.

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### HONOR VIOLENCE

#### *What is honor violence?*

Honor violence describes physical violence against a woman or girl by another family member for engaging in behavior deemed by the family to be shameful. Conduct such as resisting a marriage, seeking a divorce, dating, dressing in Western attire and wearing make-up, and having non-Muslim friends has resulted in honor violence. The beatings are intended to be corrective and usually stop if the girl changes her behavior.

#### *What is an honor killing?*

When honor violence fails to dissuade a girl or woman from complying with the wishes of her family and giving up the behavior they consider shameful, family members may conclude that the only way they can regain the "honor" lost through her behavior is to kill her. Honor killings are usually premeditated and are often carried out with the knowledge and aid of multiple family members.

#### *How is honor violence different from domestic violence?*

Although honor violence involves violence by one or more family member(s) against another, it has characteristics that make it unique and warrant a different approach by social service providers and law enforcement. In the West, domestic violence is viewed as a crime and perpetrators do not enjoy the support of their families or communities.

In contrast, honor violence is based on a centuries-old legal code and the conduct is justified in the name of religion. Additionally, honor violence is not planned and committed by the individual alone; rather the perpetrator has the support of his own family, and may even have the support of the victim's family as well. A victim of domestic violence may have an extensive support network of family and friends, whereas a victim of honor violence is likely to be shunned by family and community because she is perceived to have caused the violence through her own behavior. The victim of honor violence may also fear religious retribution in the afterlife for not submitting to the violence.

#### *Does this happen in the United States?*

Yes. There are numerous recent examples of honor violence and honor killings in the U.S., a few of which are described below. We suspect that the number of these crimes is underreported because these crimes are generally considered simple domestic violence and no government agency tracks instances of honor violence.

#### *Jessica Mokdad*

In May 2011, Rahim Alfetlawi drove from his home in Minnesota to Michigan to track down his stepdaughter, 20 year old Jessica Mokdad, who had recently moved away from Alfetlawi and her mother. After a confrontation, Alfetlawi shot Mokdad in the head, killing her. Investigators believe that Alfetlawi was angry with Mokdad for not strictly adhering to Muslim customs. He has been apprehended by police and is awaiting trial.

#### *Sarah and Amina Said*

In Texas in January 2008, Yaser Said shot and killed his teenage daughters, Sarah and Amina, because he was enraged by their Western lifestyle, particularly that they each had boyfriends. During a vigil held for the girls after their deaths, their brother took the

microphone and suggested that his sisters were responsible for what had happened to them, saying “They pulled the trigger, not my dad.” Said fled after the murders and has not yet been apprehended.

### *Noor Almaleki*

In Arizona in October 2009, Faleh Almaleki murdered his 20-year-old daughter, Noor, by running her down with his vehicle because he believed that she had shamed the family by becoming too Western and refusing to marry a man he had selected for her in Iraq. In February 2011, Almaleki was convicted of murder and sentenced to 34 ½ years in prison.

### *Fauzia A. Mohammad*

In May 2008, Waheed Allah Mohammad stabbed his 19-year-old sister, Fauzia, outside of their home in Henrietta, New York. The stabbing occurred during a heated argument between Fauzia and a number of family members over Fauzia’s plan to move to New York City with a friend. Mohammad told investigators that he had stabbed his sister because she had disgraced their family by going to clubs and wearing immodest clothing and was a “bad Muslim girl.” Mohammad pleaded guilty to attempted murder and assault and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

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## **FORCED MARRIAGE**

### *What is a forced marriage?*

A forced marriage is when a girl or woman is forced, coerced, or otherwise threatened by her family members to enter into a marriage against her will and without her consent.

### *How is this different from an arranged marriage?*

In many cultures, it is customary for families to arrange meetings between their children in the hopes of fostering a voluntary relationship that will lead to a marriage. In such situations, while the initial meetings are arranged by the families and a marriage is encouraged, the ultimate decision regarding whether to marry remains with the couple and the choice to marry is strictly voluntary. In contrast, in a forced marriage, the girl or woman is threatened and/or coerced by her family to enter into the marriage against her will and may suffer honor violence if she resists or refuses the marriage.

### *Does this happen in the United States?*

Yes. Although this is generally treated as a private family matter that remains hidden from public view, there are numerous reports of girls being taken out of school in the United States in their early teenage years and returned to their parents’ home countries to be forcibly married. For example, in 2007, the New York Daily News reported that a number of girls were being forced to return to Pakistan to marry men chosen by their families. One woman recalled being tricked and drugged before being put on a plane to Pakistan and, once there, being forced at gunpoint to acquiesce to a marriage to a man chosen by her father.

The Tahirih Justice Center released survey results in September of 2011 that found as many as 3,000 known or suspected cases of forced marriage within immigrant communities in the United States in the two years preceding the survey. We believe the actual number of forced marriage cases in the United States to be much higher, as the survey was directed towards service providers and other professionals. Many more existing cases are likely hidden from the view of officials.

The United Kingdom has set up a hotline specifically to handle cases of forced marriage. In 2010, there were 1,735 cases of forced marriage reported to the hotline. Of those victims, 131 were British citizens who were rescued after having been taken to Pakistan for marriage against their will.

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## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

### *What is female genital mutilation?*

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is any procedure involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs and is often performed on girls between the ages of 4 and 14 to ensure their virginity until marriage. FGM has no foundation in Islamic scripture or law; however, in the West it is mainly practiced in Muslim communities.

### *Is female genital mutilation harmful?*

Yes. The World Health Organization reports that FGM has no health benefits and can cause a number of health problems.

Immediately following the procedure, girls are at risk for severe pain, shock, bleeding, bacterial infection, and injury to nearby tissue. In the long term, girls and women who have suffered this procedure are at risk for recurrent bladder and urinary tract infections, cysts, infertility, and complications during intercourse and childbirth.

### *Is female genital mutilation practiced in the United States?*

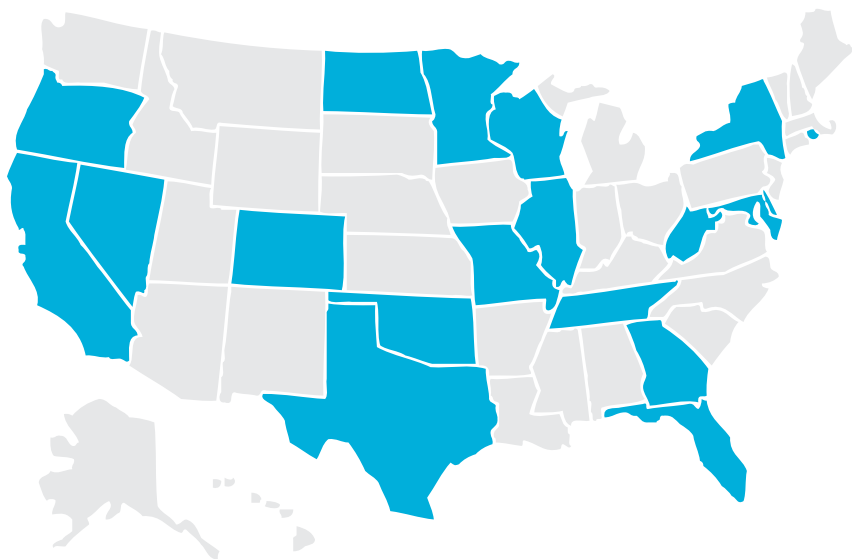
Because this is a private ritual that occurs within the secrecy of the family, there is no way of knowing exactly how prevalent FGM is in the U.S. There have been few reported cases of FGM being performed in the U.S.; however, numerous authorities suspect that the actual numbers are far higher. There is also a concern that families send their daughters out of the country to suffer the procedure.

Research conducted by the African Women's Health Center of the Brigham and Women's Hospital found that approximately 228,000 women and girls in the U.S. have either suffered the procedure or are at risk of FGM, a number that increased by approximately 35% between 1990 and 2000.

### *Is female genital mutilation a crime?*

Yes, FGM has been a crime under federal law since 1996 and is punishable by up to five years in prison. It is not a crime to take your daughter abroad to undergo the procedure.

*Female genital mutilation is a crime in the following states:*



*However, in many states where FGM is a crime, the sentencing provisions are quite weak. For example, in New York, a person convicted of FGM may avoid a prison sentence and receive only a sentence of probation.*

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## SHARIA LAW

### *What is Sharia law?*

Sharia is Islamic law. The Sharia is based on the Quran, the Sunna (the Hadith, sayings and deeds of the Prophet), the ijma (consensus of scholars) and the qiyas (analytical deduction). It governs civil, criminal, and family matters. The provisions of Sharia are incompatible with modern Western individual rights, particularly the equal rights of women.

For example, under the sections of Sharia law civil code governing marriage and child custody, a marriage contract is between the woman's father (or other male guardian) and her husband and a man can have up to four wives. A man can divorce his wife by simple repudiation, whereas a woman must give justification for requesting a divorce and meet an extremely high burden of proof. If a woman does obtain a divorce and later remarries, she loses custody of her children, even if the father is abusive.

Sharia penal law is likewise repugnant to Western legal values and women's rights. Sharia law permits a woman to be stoned to death for having sex outside of marriage. Homosexuality and apostasy are also death penalty crimes. Failure to wear a veil can result in fines and imprisonment and can be used as a justification for honor violence.

In any proceeding governed by Sharia law, a woman's testimony is worth only half that of a man's.

### *Is Sharia law used in the United States?*

Presently, there are no publicly known Sharia courts operating in the United States. However, there is a concern that certain principles of Sharia may be accepted in U.S. courts. A recent case from a family court proceeding New Jersey highlights the danger to women of accepting any elements of Sharia law in U.S. courts. In a case alleging domestic violence and rape by a husband against his wife, the husband argued that his religion permitted his conduct because “you are my wife, I c[an] do anything to you. The woman, she should submit and do anything I ask her to do.” The judge accepted this defense, finding that the husband did not have the criminal intent to rape his wife: “The court believes that he was operating under his belief that it is, as the husband, his desire to have sex when and whether he wanted to, was something that was consistent with his practices and it was something that was not prohibited.” Fortunately, this case was reversed on appeal. The appellate court specifically found that the judge erred in allowing the defendant’s religious beliefs to excuse his criminal conduct.

### *Is Sharia law used in any other Western countries?*

Yes. Sharia “arbitration courts” operate in the United Kingdom and adjudicate marriage, divorce, inheritance, and guardianship matters when both parties consent to the case being handled in that forum. These courts usually operate out of mosques and the judges are not selected or supervised by any independent legal body. In these courts, parties often do not have access to legal advice and representation. Proceedings in these courts are not recorded and there is no right to appeal. In June 2011, a British member of the House of Lords proposed that Islamic courts be forced to acknowledge the primacy of English law because of “deep concerns” that Muslim women are suffering discrimination within closed sharia law councils. Sharia courts have also been proposed in Australia and Canada.

## WHERE DO YOU FIT IN?

By starting a college chapter of the AHA Foundation, you and your fellow members will be helping us to raise awareness of and gain interest about our core issues. You may also be able to help us with important research projects or distribute our informational brochures to appropriate facilities on campus. We also need your help in promoting our legislative outreach efforts.

Within these parameters, we invite you to get creative; setting up book clubs, holding trivia nights and sponsoring speakers are just a few ideas. Distributing our materials and talking with your fellow students on campus is another great way to raise awareness.

No matter what activities you and your chapter decide to take on, we hope that your experience with the AHA Foundation will be a fulfilling one and will lead you towards a lifelong commitment to standing up for human rights. Welcome to the AHA Foundation!

## *getting started*

### **CAMPUS REGISTRATION**

The first step in starting a campus chapter of the AHA Foundation is getting properly registered on your campus. Every campus has different requirements for clubs that could consist of a minimum number of members and creating a club constitution. Contact your school's development office, student government association or club council to get the school's written policies. In addition to club requirements, this information should outline details such as the procedure for forming a club, what benefits the school provides to clubs, the responsibilities involved, and any expectations in terms of faculty advisors.

The AHA Foundation does not recognize chapters formed without proper school authorization. Campus registration could also entitle your club to benefits that are helpful in the success of the organization, such as meeting space, funding, email accounts and more.

### **FACULTY ADVISOR**

In some schools, it may be mandatory to have a faculty advisor for your club. Even if it is not mandatory, it may be a good idea to find one. Faculty advisors can help provide valuable advice and also help in the continuity of your group once the originating members have all graduated.

It is important to choose carefully when selecting your faculty advisor. Look for someone who is outspoken and passionate about human rights. There may be an obvious choice on campus or you could look for a professor of women's studies, religious studies, ethnic studies, social work, anthropology, or perhaps law.

## MEMBERS

Now that you have successfully set up your organization on campus, you need to find fellow students who are willing to stand up for the rights of women and girls to join your organization.

Advertising your new club on campus is a great way to find new members. Posting fliers around campus (be sure to find out locations that are acceptable for fliers on campus prior to posting!) or putting a listing in your college newspaper are two ways to advertise the existence of the new AHA Foundation club on campus. Your university may have a Facebook page, a newsletter or an events email where you could post recruitment notices.

Additionally, there are a few obvious places on campus where you might find people who are interested in joining. If there is a women's center on campus, you could talk to the staff members and those who use the facility about joining. It would also be a great place to post recruitment posters. Classes on women's studies, religious studies, ethnic studies, social work and even anthropology classes are all great places you can look for recruits. Speak with professors of these classes about giving you a few minutes to introduce yourself, the Foundation and your new club during class.

There are possibly other like-minded organizations on campus that may have members who would also like to get involved with your new club.

## LEADERSHIP

One of the benefits of starting a chapter of the AHA Foundation on campus is the ability to develop leadership skills. Appointing leaders of your college chapter will ensure the club is properly managed and will help with the continuity of the organization year after year.

The best way to decide who should fill leadership roles is through an election process. The following leadership roles are suggested for your college chapter.

### *President*

This person leads meetings, helps direct the focus of the club and is given the final say on important decisions. The chapter President will also participate in calls with other chapter Presidents, led by the AHA Foundation, each semester. During these calls, we will discuss each club's progress and go over any stumbling blocks you may be facing. We will update you on new AHA Foundation initiatives and suggest ideas for events. Overall, we hope these calls will foster a connection between the college chapters, creating a network of ideas, help and inspiration.

### *Events Manager*

The Events Manager coordinates all chapter events.

### *Communications Manager*

The Communications Manager is in charge of communicating the chapter's message on campus. They are also tasked with publicizing any upcoming events in coordination with the Events Manager and working with the Membership Coordinator to do any communications in conjunction with recruitment efforts. It is important that the

Communications Manager is up-to-speed on all the AHA Foundation's issues and communicates directly with the AHA Foundation to learn the Foundation's stance on particular issues and legislative efforts.

#### *Financial Manager*

The Financial Manager creates a budget for the chapter organization and handles all chapter finances.

#### *Membership Coordinator*

The Membership Coordinator is charged with managing efforts to bring in new members. They will also keep track of all current members, keeping records of physical and email addresses.

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## **CONTINUATION OF YOUR CAMPUS AHA FOUNDATION CHAPTER**

As a leader in your college's chapter of the AHA Foundation, it is your responsibility to ensure the continuation of the club. This includes making sure positions are filled once you leave them and assisting with proper training of new leaders. It is suggested that all chapter leaders keep up-to-date lists of contacts and useful resources.

## **WELCOME CALL**

Once you have registered on campus and have chosen leadership for your chapter, it is time to set up a Welcome Call with the AHA Foundation. Please send us an email at [info@theahafoundation.org](mailto:info@theahafoundation.org) in order to set up a date and time. During this Welcome Call, we will go over the handbook, discuss event ideas and address any questions you might have. This is our chance to get to know you. We encourage as many members as possible to participate!

## *your chapter*

### FOCUS

One of the most important acts as you start your chapter of the AHA Foundation is to determine the focus. This focus should serve not only you and your members but also the AHA Foundation as a whole. The AHA Foundation is depending on you to spread the message of the AHA Foundation and our mission to young people who are potential life-long AHA Foundation supporters. Because of this, we encourage you to choose campus awareness as your main focus.

To create an organization with longevity and clear purpose, it is important that you take the time to formulate your long-term plans and what you would ultimately like your campus chapter to accomplish. Deciding on an appropriate focus requires consideration of the group's size, resources, available time and group strengths.

### MEETINGS

After you have established a solid member base, your new college chapter of the AHA Foundation can start meeting on a regular basis.

It's important to keep meetings structured, relevant and punctual. Meetings are where you meet and motivate, plan and decide. They are the core of all activity within your chapter. The quality of your meetings often determines the success of your organization. Each meeting has several important structural basics that should be followed.

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## LOGISTICS

### *Location*

Most colleges provide free space for registered groups to meet. If not, look around and you are sure to find free space in your neighborhood in activity centers, student unions, or you can meet in a local coffee shop or restaurant.

### *Time*

Decide on a convenient time for your members to meet. This should be recurring (monthly, for example) so that your members are able to plan ahead and fit the meetings into their regular schedule. College students are busy, so make sure to start and end on time. Keeping meetings an hour or shorter will help ensure that people remain engaged and interested.

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## MEETING BASICS

### *Agenda*

A draft agenda should be agreed upon and prepared prior to each group meeting. This agenda should be distributed in advance via email and should include date, time and meeting location. Preparing an agenda helps ensure that all items are discussed and that the meeting is held in an orderly and timely fashion.

### *Meeting Minutes*

It is important to keep an accurate record of meeting minutes so that all decisions, action items and who is to accomplish what is recorded. One person can be selected to take minutes or the responsibility can rotate.

A general outline is all that's needed; don't try to record what happens word-for-word. The meeting minutes should be distributed via email after each meeting so that members are reminded of decisions made and actions to be taken and members who were unable to attend are aware of what happened in their absence.

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## DISCUSSIONS

The group should agree upon a set of specific rules regarding how discussions are to be handled. This includes rules such as "Only one person has the floor at a time," and are common sense courtesy in most cases.

These rules will be straightforward, but sometimes are hard to follow during a heated discussion. It is up to the President of the organization to run the meetings and ensure that people follow the rules that have been agreed upon.

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## DECISION MAKING

The typical way to make decisions is by voting. This tends to be the easiest and most efficient method for deciding between choices. Your group may opt for different methods, such as consensus, where you try to get agreement from everyone involved. However, the AHA Foundation suggests sticking to taking votes.

## FUNDS

Each chapter will need a limited number of funds each year for projects, publicity, food and drinks, etc. However, most campus organizations spend less than \$100 each year, so funding should not be your primary worry. A college chapter of the AHA Foundation has many ways to create positive change without spending any or only spending very little money!

Examples of Inexpensive Activities:

- Posting fliers
- Holding rallies
- Hosting book clubs
- Setting up a table to discuss the AHA Foundation
- Email campaigns
- Facebook/Twitter campaigns

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## BUDGETING

Regardless of the activities your group chooses, it is important to set and stick to a budget. This should be done at least once a year and with the participation of the entire group. This helps pinpoint your focus and ensures you are appropriately planning activities based on what you have available.

The first step in budgeting is to determine how much money is available. Some colleges offer funds to groups, and your chapter may elect to collect a small amount of dues as part of membership. The total of these funds is what you have to work with for the entire year.

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## CAMPUS FUNDING

Upon registering your chapter with the school, you should find out about any campus funding available to groups. If not, check with the student activities office to see if there is funding available. If so, it is important to apply for funding right away. Often, the earlier you apply, the more likely it is you will receive funding.

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## DUES

Each school has rules about how clubs are able to collect and use funds, so please be sure to find out your school's rules prior to making any decisions on collecting dues. It's possible that, if your school allows, you may decide to charge a few dollars from your members for dues each year to pay for printing and any other small expense that may come up.

## EVENT PLANNING

The main goal of your events should usually be to raise awareness of the AHA Foundation and our issues. First and foremost, it is important to emphasize with all events that our mission is about the human rights of girls and women in the United States. This should also be kept in mind during each phase of every event, from planning to execution.

Try to hold several awareness building events each year. They don't have to be expensive to be effective. Below are a few ideas, but please don't limit yourselves to this list!

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## LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH

Young people are often the most outspoken on political issues and we need to harness the power of those voices! Your chapter can make a real impact on strengthening existing laws and enacting new laws that protect women and girls in the United States.

At the AHA Foundation, we will provide you with the appropriate language to use for fliers, Facebook and Twitter campaigns to support these important legislative initiatives. You can see our existing efforts here. From there, it's up to you and your team to spread the word as far, wide and as loudly as possible!

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## SPEAKERS

Great speakers don't always come in the packages you expect. You can find great speakers on our issues in your community. Keep an eye out for local lawyers who are outspoken against Sharia or who have taken on immigration issues for women who are afraid of oppression in their home countries. Perhaps a professor in the women's studies department has a great deal of knowledge about any number of our topics and would be willing to address an audience.

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## BOOK CLUB NIGHTS

Hosting a campus book club night is a super easy event that can bring much-needed awareness to our issues. We have included book club guides for both *Infidel* and *Nomad* by our founder, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, in this appendix, but there are also many other books you can choose that address our areas of focus!

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## WALKS/DEMONSTRATIONS/TABLING

Consider choosing important dates and create an event that coincides with the importance of the date. For example, February 6th is International Day of Zero Tolerance of Female Genital Mutilation. Having an "End FGM" march that day would make people aware of this barbaric practice and hopefully inspire them to speak out as well!

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## PLANNING FOR YOUR EVENT

In planning for your event, you should first consider what you want to accomplish with the event. From there, you can determine the best type of event based on available resources and your ultimate goals.

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## PREPARATION FOR YOUR EVENT

Almost all of the actual work for an event happens before the event itself. Many things need to be considered and organized in advance to hold a successful event. The below is a basic list of preparations to consider, but depending upon the event you hold, there may be more!

### *Location/Time*

These should be made as convenient as possible for your attendees. Obviously on or near campus will be best for most of your audience.

### *Materials*

Any necessary materials should be arranged well in advance of the event. Make sure to bring more than you expect to need. Remember to plan for any informational materials you will want on hand, such as brochures and fact sheets.

### *Verification*

Once you have a location and all the necessary individuals agreement to participate, double and triple check with them to make sure everything is still set and ready to go as planned.

### *Set-up*

Prior to actually setting up for the event, plan what you will need. You should consider EVERYTHING here, big and small, from the audio/visual requirements to bringing tape to hang signs.

### *Audience*

A successful event needs good attendance! Advertise using fliers, chalking sidewalks, advertisements, word of mouth, Facebook/Twitter campaigns.

### *Complications*

Think through any potential obstacles in advance to come up with plans in case it rains the day of your outdoor event or if your speaker has to cancel at the last minute.

## *expectations*

The AHA Foundation expects each chapter to take positions in line with the AHA Foundation. We encourage each college chapter to reach out to the AHA Foundation directly with any questions on our stance on particular issues or whether a certain issue is even something we are planning to address.

As a college chapter of the AHA Foundation you are not authorized to make statements to the media (aside from your collegiate newspaper). Any media requests should be immediately directed to [info@theahafoundation.org](mailto:info@theahafoundation.org).

In addition to the chapter President's call each semester, please keep us up-to-date on your activities and leadership by submitting the info to the AHA Foundation at least once a year.

Most importantly, remember that you have the sincere thanks from everyone at the AHA Foundation for your hard work and dedication!

# appendix

## GET HELP

Women everywhere, of all cultures, merit access to education and basic human rights. If you or someone you know needs help please email us at: [help@theahafoundation.org](mailto:help@theahafoundation.org).

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### **IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, DIAL 911 OR YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES.**

The U.S. Department of State's highest priority overseas is the protection and welfare of U.S. citizens. If you or someone you know is a U.S. citizen and could be or has been a victim of forced marriage overseas, please call the U.S. Embassy/Consulate nearest you. You can also call the Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). For further information and local embassy and consulate contact details, please refer to the Country Specific Information section on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website, [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

## INFIDEL BOOK CLUB GUIDE

This reading group guide for *Infidel* includes an introduction, information about the AHA Foundation, discussion questions, and ideas for enhancing your book club. The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your discussion. We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

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### INTRODUCTION

Raised in a strict Muslim family and extended clan, Hirsi Ali survived civil war, female genital mutilation, brutal beatings, and life in four troubled, unstable countries largely ruled by despots. As an adolescent, she was a devout believer in Islam, at a time when the Muslim Brotherhood was on the rise. In her early twenties, she escaped from a forced marriage and sought asylum in the Netherlands, where she earned a masters degree in political science, became a Dutch Parliamentarian and fought for the rights of Muslim immigrant women and the reform of Islam. Even though she is under constant threat—demonized by reactionary Islamists and politicians, disowned by her father, and expelled from her family and clan—she refuses to be silenced.

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### THE AHA FOUNDATION

In response to ongoing abuses of women's rights in the name of religion and culture, activist and academic Ayaan Hirsi Ali and her supporters established the AHA Foundation in 2007 as a charitable organization to help protect and defend the rights of women in the West. Through

research, the dissemination of knowledge, and outreach, the Foundation aims to combat several types of crimes against women, including the abridgement of the education of girls, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, honor violence, and honor killings.

For more information, please visit [www.theahafoundation.org](http://www.theahafoundation.org).

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## TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1.

Hirsi Ali tells us that this book is “the story of what I have experienced, what I have seen, and why I think the way I do” (page xii). Which experiences does she highlight as being integral to forming her current views?

2.

“No eyes silently accused me of being a whore. No lecherous men called me to bed with them. No Brotherhood members threatened me with hellfire. I felt safe; I could follow my curiosity” (page 185). This passage refers to Hirsi Ali’s initial impression of walking the streets in Germany. What other significant differences between the West and tribal Africa did she observe during her first days in Europe? Upon arriving in Holland, what were her initial impressions of the Dutch people and the Dutch government? Did these change significantly as she lived there?

3.

How did Hirsi Ali’s immigration experience and integration into Dutch society differ from those of other Somalis?

4.

Discuss the differences that Hirsi Ali noticed between raising children in tribal settings and raising children in the West. In particular, what did she notice about Johanna’s parenting?

5.

As seen through Hirsi Ali’s eyes, what factors contributed to Haweya’s death? How might members of her family describe events differently?

6.

Although Hirsi Ali mostly refrains from criticizing her father, she publishes the personal letter he wrote her upon her divorce. Why do you think she included this letter? Were you surprised by any other intimate details of her life that she revealed in the book?

7.

On page 295, Hirsi Ali lists the three goals she wished to accomplish by joining Parliament. By the book’s end has she accomplished all three? How did her views of the Dutch government change over time?

8.

Examine Hirsi Ali’s relationship with her brother. How did Mahad’s and Abeh’s reactions to her political work differ?

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## ENHANCING YOUR BOOK CLUB

1.

Go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) to watch a version of Theo van Gogh and Hirsi Ali's film, *Submission: Part One*.

2.

Take a look on the web for Hirsi Ali's most recent statements about freedom of speech or women's rights. Bring in a copy of any interviews you find and share with your group.

3.

The AHA Foundation, founded by Hirsi Ali and her supporters, constantly updates its website with news articles relating to issues discussed in *Infidel*. Go to <http://theahafoundation.org/category/news/> and choose some recent articles of interest. Use them to start a discussion with your fellow book club members on events happening today that directly relate to topics discussed in *Infidel*. Which topics seem to be most prominently featured in current events? What improvements, if any, are being made to better protect the rights of girls and women?

## NOMAD BOOK CLUB GUIDE

This reading group guide for *Nomad* includes an introduction, information about the AHA Foundation, discussion questions, and ideas for enhancing your book club. The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your discussion. We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

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### INTRODUCTION

*Nomad* is the portrait of a family torn apart by the clash of civilizations. But it is also a touching, uplifting, and often funny account of one woman's discovery of America. *Nomad* is Ayaan Hirsi Ali's second memoir. Her first, *Infidel*, recounts her coming-of-age in Somalia and her escape from an arranged marriage to live in Holland. *Nomad* recounts the many turns her life took after she broke with her family, and how she struggled to throw off restrictive superstitions and misconceptions that initially hobbled her ability to assimilate into Western society. Through stories of the challenges she has faced, which represent the challenges faced by most Muslim immigrants to the West, she shows the difficulty of reconciling the contradictions of Islam with Western values. She writes movingly of her reconciliation, on his deathbed, with her devout father, who had disowned her when she renounced Islam after the attacks of September 11. While Hirsi Ali loves much of what she encounters in America, she fears we are repeating the European mistake of underestimating radical Islam. She calls on key institutions of the West—including universities, feminists, and Christian churches—to enact specific, innovative remedies that would help other Muslim immigrants to overcome the challenges she has experienced

and to resist the fatal allure of fundamentalism and terrorism.

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## THE AHA FOUNDATION

In response to ongoing abuses of women’s rights in the name of religion and culture, activist and academic Ayaan Hirsi Ali and her supporters established the AHA Foundation in 2007 as a charitable organization to help protect and defend the rights of women in the West. Through research, the dissemination of knowledge, and outreach, the Foundation aims to combat several types of crimes against women, including the abridgement of the education of girls, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, honor violence, and honor killings.

For more information, please visit [www.theahafoundation.org](http://www.theahafoundation.org).

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## TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1.

Compare Hirsi Ali’s relationship with her absent father with that of her mother. In what ways does Hirsi Ali’s father seem to identify with her more than her mother does? Why do both parents label their own daughter as foreign to them when she renounces her family and her faith? What does Hirsi Ali’s break from her family suggest to you about her character? What do you think her family’s perspective would be on her?

2.

How does Hirsi Ali’s account of her nomadic childhood—particularly with respect to her interactions with her older brother, Mahad—reveal the divergent ways in which boys and girls in tribal Somali families are treated? To what extent do you agree with Hirsi Ali’s contention that the

veiling of Muslim women perpetuates misogyny and sexism?

3.

How does the “consensus society” in Holland that Hirsi Ali encounters, first as an immigrant and later as a member of Parliament, reveal important lessons to her about the nature of Dutch politics? (p. 104) How would you compare Dutch politics with politics in the United States? How does Hirsi Ali’s own uncertain status as an immigrant relate to the failure of the Dutch government? How does her bittersweet departure from Holland mark Hirsi Ali’s sense of herself as a nomad?

4.

“Roughly 130 million women around the world have had their genitals cut” (p. 128). How does Hirsi Ali’s position on the need to end genital mutilation of young girls resonate for you? Why does this procedure continue in many parts of the world, and why do grandmothers and mothers continue to enable it for their daughters? How does genital mutilation connect to the sexual politics implicit in tribal societies?

5.

How does the fact that Hirsi Ali has to have round-the-clock security in the United States because of death threats against her make you feel about the points about freedom that she makes in *Nomad*? What in her writing do you think incites threats?

6.

“Instead of affirming the value of tribal lifestyles, people in the West—activists, thinkers, government officials—should be working to dismantle them” (p. 213). How is Hirsi Ali’s statement especially provocative in a society that appreciates cultural, religious, and racial diversity? Based on what you have learned about tribal lifestyles from this book, do you agree or disagree with her remark?

7.

“Modernity is a permanent state that replaces your former outlook. You can try to fight it, but it is irresistible” (p. 259). Why does modernity pose such a threat to the tribal way of life in countries like Somalia? How do technological advances threaten the old ways of life directly and indirectly?

8.

Hirsi Ali writes movingly about herself and other Muslims who emerge from tribal societies to live in a globalized world. In what respects do fundamental issues like sex, money, and violence throw into sharp relief the challenges faced by immigrants who feel torn between adhering to their traditions and responding to the changes demanded by their new circumstances?

9.

Of the many anecdotes that Hirsi Ali offers of her extended family (from her dying father to her unborn daughter), which have resonated most with you, and why? How might her own remarkable personal journey from that of a faithful, tribal Muslim girl in Somalia to that of an atheist political analyst in urban America illustrate the role that family plays in one’s destiny?

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## ENHANCE YOUR BOOK CLUB

1.

In *Nomad*, Ayaan Hirsi Ali writes a letter to her deceased grandmother and a letter to her unborn daughter. Neither addressee can read the

letter Hirsi Ali is writing when she composes it, and both of her letters contain important information about her beliefs and feelings. If you could choose anyone in your family to write to—especially someone who couldn’t read your words—a grandparent, a future grandchild, a future spouse—what would you write about? What information or feelings would you feel compelled to share, and why? You may want to reveal your letters, or the ideas behind them and their intended recipients, to your fellow book club members.

2.

As an immigrant in Holland, Hirsi Ali was shocked to discover that her newly adopted country was willing to lend her money and shelter her until she could establish herself as a productive and financially independent member of society. How familiar are you with the immigrant experience in your country? Are any members of your family immigrants? From what countries and when did they immigrate? What aspects of their or your immigrant experiences seemed familiar with those Hirsi Ali encountered? You may want to share observations and recollections with fellow members of your book club.

3.

The AHA Foundation, founded by Hirsi Ali and her supporters, constantly updates its website with news articles relating to issues discussed in *Nomad*. Go to <http://theahafoundation.org/category/news/> and choose some recent articles of interest. Use them to start a discussion with your fellow book club members on events happening today that directly relate to topics discussed in *Nomad*. Which topics seem to be most prominently featured in current events? What improvements, if any, are being made to better protect the rights of girls and women?

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*“It is a matter of principle that  
women are free and equal.”*

- AYAAN HIRSI ALI

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